Eatsmart: A Multi-State Web Based Designed Certification Program For Nutrition Educators.
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Louisiana State University Cooperative Extension Service uses the paraprofessional model for nutrition education targeting low-income populations. This model emphasizes development of competencies related directly to performance management. Technical knowledge of nutrition education is important but poses a logistical challenge to programs based on this model.

In 2000, LSU AgCenter nutrition faculty developed a web-based nutrition curriculum, EatSmart, in collaboration with nutrition specialists from other universities. EatSmart includes more than 25 nutrition education modules. A workbook developed by the Texas A&M University Agricultural Extension Service serves as an additional tool to enhance learning. The EatSmart curriculum is used as study material for the Nutrition Educator Certification Program.

The paraprofessionals (Nutrition Educators) were required to study the nutrition curriculum on the computer. Two hours each week were allowed for study. The EatSmart web site provides self-guided pre- and post-tests that paraprofessionals could use to assess readiness. In order to complete the Certification Program, paraprofessionals had to complete the EatSmart curriculum, pass a nutrition test, and demonstrate application of principles learned. A monitored nutrition test was offered once a year.

Since 2000, 101 LSU AgCenter Nutrition Educators (77 EFNEP and 24 FNP) have taken the nutrition test. Of those tested, 80 Nutrition Educators (61 EFNEP and 19 FNP) have passed and also completed the Certification Program, as indicated by a passing score of 75% on the written, moderated nutrition test and demonstrated application of principles learned.

EatSmart is an effective tool used to increase the core competencies of paraprofessionals in community nutrition programs.